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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 001420

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2013

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SUBJECT: SPIEGEL BRIEFS ON FENCE ACTIONS, PREPS MOFAZ FOR WASHINGTON MEETINGS

Classified By: Political Counselor Norman H. Olsen for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) BG (res) Baruch Spiegel called POL/C to a short-notice meeting March 8 to detail the latest steps in his assigned effort to address for the MOD measures to relieve the problems for Palestinians caused by the separation barrier. He said the advanced timing of the meeting was designed to convey to Washington the latest developments, on which he had briefed DefMin Mofaz the night before, and to offer the USG a chance to raise any questions -- now or in the next 48 hours -- on which he should update Mofaz prior to the minister's Washington meetings later this week. Spiegel also noted, following receipt of a telephone call during the meeting, that he would be appearing on several television channels that evening to discuss his work and the measures he has recommended.

2. (C) Without himself detailing specific points, Spiegel said that press coverage of recently announced measures to professionalize IDF conduct and operations at what will now be called the checkpoints, vice roadblocks, is accurate. The measures cited in press announcements include better infrastructure, better training of personnel, an IDF code of conduct, uniform rules, a "green line" for fast passage of ambulances, VIPs and vital workers, restroom facilities, water faucets and garbage cans. Further, he said, the fence map now looks completely different, with the "loops" into the West Bank "postponed" for now. These measures, he said, will address most of the questions put to him by DAS Satterfield and NSC Director Danin during their last visit. He noted that they are also similar to measures that MOD officials discussed with DAPNSA Hadley, A/S Burns and Senior Director Abrams during their recent visit.

3. (C) In addition, seven checkpoints will be upgraded, beginning immediately. The Jerusalem area checkpoints are Kalandia, Wadi El Nahar, and what he termed #300 near Bethlehem. He described the others, which he did not name, as four checkpoints around Nablus that will remain in place for what he termed the time being, leaving open the possibility that they might be removed at some unspecified point. Timing of the full renovations will be in months, not weeks, given budget and construction issues and training times. Mofaz, whom he termed "very informed," will be prepared to discuss these improvements, although Spiegel was not sure whether Mofaz would raise them himself, or would simply be prepared to respond to questions.

4. (C) Spiegel said that other issues under consideration are: relocation of some checkpoints along the fence, increases in opening times; facilitating transportation for Palestinian school children; and addressing the needs of Palestinians whose homes are now separated by the separation barrier from their lands. All these issues are now the subject of staff work, he said.

5. (C) On specific issues that the Embassy has raised previously with Spiegel, he offered the following:

-- The fence that had run to the east of Baqa al Sharqiya, separating it from the West Bank, is being moved to run between the Israeli village of Baqa al Gharbiya and the Palestinian village of Nazlet Issa, just west of Baqa al Sharqiya. The barrier will have a special gate, manned by three Israeli personnel, for the use of members of seven families with identified needs to cross regularly, for identified persons with "first class credentials," and for other individuals with special needs yet to be identified. Other people will need to use other crossing points, such as the one at Zayteh, to the south, and Reihan, to the north. Asked why, if that gate exists and must be manned in any event, the GOI would limit passage, Spiegel explained that the 37 barrier crossing points planned so far for between Salem and Qalqilya will range from limited-use doors or gates up to major personnel and cargo transit crossings with significant terminal facilities. For instance, the crossing at Jalameh, farther to the northeast, will be a major facility, including for cargo transit. He added that Salem crossing point will be limited to unspecified Israeli operational needs and will not serve as a regular passage.

-- At Beit Surik, north of Jerusalem, Spiegel is looking at proposals to prevent Palestinians from being separated by a

close-running fence route from several thousand dunams of their land on the southern side of the village. Spiegel showed POL/C a map with the present fence route, close to the village, and what he described as one alternative: a broader loop of fence that runs closer to the Green Line and to the Israeli village of Nevasserat. He pointed to a high point of ground northeast of Nevasserat and slightly south of east from Beit Surik, identifying it as a critical security overlook and a site that would remain on the Israeli side of the fence under any circumstances.

-- On the Rosary Sisters school case, where the separation barrier runs close to the school and separates Israeli students from their homes, Spiegel said he had met with school representatives that afternoon and taken with him a portfolio of documents to consider.

-- On the Jerusalem barrier overall, Spiegel said GOI officials had come to the decision to cease construction in those areas where he has identified problems until legal issues have been resolved and until remedial measures are both identified and ready for implementation. For instance, he said, construction of wall sections will not continue without inclusion of necessary crossing points. Wall and gate construction will proceed concurrently. Kalandia and A Ram crossings will be big complexes, he added, and officials there are checking house to house before proceeding.

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